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ABSTRACT

This short pamphlet promotes the Newspaper in Education (NIE) program. The pamphlet discusses reasons why educators should choose newspapers as instructional tools; how newspapers can be used for indivdualized instruction, reading, writing, computing, and critical thinking; what the research says about the use of newspapers in schools; what services are available through NIE; and how to get an NIE program started. (MS)

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EDUCATORS: Try NIE

Newspaper in Education
ANPA Foundation

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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Dear Educator:

If you are like most teachers and administrators, you probably are engaged in a continual search for educationally sound instructional materials. Although many items cross your desk, those you choose must add sparkle to your classrooms and at the same time be appropriate for the students who will be using them.

And, like most educators, you probably apply clearly defined standards when judging whether a given set of materials will be used with your students. Of course, resources you select must mesh with the goals and objectives you are trying to achieve. Other considerations will undoubtedly be whether the materials are accessible, accurate and economical.

We would like to suggest that newspapers are the instructional materials you are looking for. The Newspaper in Education program, in existence for more than 30 years, is a national system of cooperation between school districts and local newspapers. Some 600 newspapers—representing 76.5 percent of daily circulation—participate in the NIE program throughout the academic year. Students at all grade levels use the newspaper as a vital part of their daily studies.

NIE programs have several areas of concentration. In one, students learn about the newspaper—how it is put together, what makes news, how to read the newspaper critically, how to separate fact from opinion and the crucial role that a free press plays in our nation's well-being.

Another dimension of NIE has students learn *with* newspapers. Newspapers become key resources for teaching concepts and skills in all subject areas and at all grade levels.

The pages that follow spell out some educational rationales for using newspapers in your classroom. We urge you to consider Newspaper in Education for your students.

Sincerely,

Edward F. DeRoche
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Why choose newspapers?

A worthy goal for any school system is to produce students who are able to read, understand and use newspapers. Citizens who have daily newspaper reading habits are well informed and better able to practice democratic ideas and ideals. Students who use newspapers in school will be helped to comprehend world events and international politics. Youngsters exposed to newspapers will learn to develop empathy for people in varying circumstances and will be better able to understand and cope with the human condition. The mysteries of nature, of science and of the physical world may well become subjects for students to ponder.

On a practical level, students who read newspapers will learn to sharpen family living skills; develop reading, writing, speaking and listening abilities; examine and use information presented through charts, graphs, pictures and words; use leisure time well; manage money, property and resources; practice and understand the principles of health and safety; gain information needed to make career decisions; appreciate culture and beauty; and develop a desire to learn that will probably continue throughout life.

The list is endless. Newspapers can and do provide students with a broad outlook—and the skills and information that are essential keys to productive adult lives.

From an educational standpoint, then, newspapers work exceptionally well as instructional tools.

Motivation: *a key to learning*

In general, individuals do not learn unless they experience some urge or motivation to do so. Youngsters, in particular, do best with materials that matter to them, that are relevant to their everyday lives. Science and math, for example, become more alive when students can approach these disciplines by reading reports about snowstorms and space flights and football games. Newspapers, then, are "real-life referents" for teaching what otherwise might be abstract concepts.

Newspapers are fresh, up-to-date and practical. They help bridge the gap between the textbook and the real world.

Individualized instruction: *students learn at different rates and in different ways*

Most textbooks cannot take individual differences into account. But newspapers contain information written at a variety of reading levels, and so are well suited to individualized instruction. With NIE, sophisticated students might analyze political endorsements in editorials, while those who need help with the basics might practice sequencing skills by using comic strips. Since newspapers are what adults generally read, youngsters often see them as more "important" and credible than textbooks. In a child's eyes, newspapers do not have the social stigma usually associated with remedial materials.

And practice helps. Newspapers provide students with many opportunities to practice what they have learned in class. Even reluctant learners will practice reading material that interests them: sports scores, movie times, comic strips.

Reading, writing and computing: *the basics*

Mastery of the basics is enhanced with newspaper-related activities. Newspapers provide an abundance of interesting reading material on a daily basis. For children who need help decoding words, newspapers provide both simple and complex examples. For those who need to practice summarizing a story's main idea, newspapers provide articles on a variety of subjects, in a variety of lengths. Students can begin to develop writing skills by creating headlines and photo captions; news and feature story writing assignments might be the next step. Grocery ads may be the source of computation exercises. Preschoolers can practice letter identification, while high schoolers can concentrate on reading comprehension. The possibilities are endless.

Wanted: *critical thinking skills, retention and transfer of learning*

Thinking skills—learning to apply, analyze and evaluate information—are tools that all forms of schooling aim to impart. Newspapers lend themselves to this sort of study in a number of ways: youngsters may be asked to read articles and summarize their main points by writing headlines; track the reporting of a major news story to understand events in chronological sequence; devise the best way to advertise a used car for sale; or interpret the symbolism in an editorial cartoon.

Students who become enveloped in the events of daily life attach a sense of immediacy and involvement to exercises they might otherwise dismiss as just "schoolwork." Content that is relevant and used is likely to be retained. Moreover, with newspapers, the potential for transfer of learning is enhanced.

A plus as a teaching tool: *newspapers are likely to be used by students throughout their lives*

Although reading and using newspapers is a worthwhile goal in and of itself, the fact that newspapers continue to be available after formal schooling has ended makes them even more attractive as classroom tools. For many adults, newspapers become "continuous textbooks" and may be the only printed matter read with any regularity.

Teachers are role models. Those who value newspapers and use them with their students are likely to have students who also value newspapers, and understand their role in contemporary society. This may be especially important for students who do not have access to newspapers at home.

The selection of a teaching tool has both cognitive and affective implications. If the goal, for example, is to teach students about government, then there are many types of material that will work. But if the goal is to have students *want to continue* learning about government, then selecting newspapers as an educational resource takes on added significance.

Learning: *an active, not passive, process*

Participatory activities help students learn. In NIE, youngsters do not simply read the newspaper; they may be asked to cut apart comic strips, draw their own political cartoons, underline action verbs or comparison shop. Moreover, learning is something that occurs both in and out of school. With newspapers, parents and teachers can take part in students' educational activities.

Many strategies exist: *which should you choose?*

Professional educators know that variety is the spice of classroom life. Teachers who use several different strategies have an increased chance of sparking student interest in the subjects under consideration. And as a rule, higher interest means greater student achievement.

Because their content is always changing, newspapers offer interesting alternatives to traditional practices. Though newspapers may reflect themes and topics common with those in textbooks, newspapers continually provide new examples and applications. Newspapers can stand alone as teaching tools—or they can be used as supplements to other instructional techniques.

What the research says

In the educational literature of the 1970s and '80s, research reports show that:

- Newspaper use in school increases student awareness about the world at large and the immediate community, and has a positive effect on student attitudes toward school, community and subject matter.
- Students who used newspapers as a principal source material had better achievement scores in social studies, language arts and mathematics than their matched counterparts, who relied only on textbooks.

- In one study, reading skills increased by two grade levels for students who used newspapers, as compared to those using traditional methods. In another study, reading scores were consistently higher for 12- to 18-year-olds who used newspapers or a combination of newspapers and textbooks; in some cases, scores differed by as much as four grade levels after using newspapers in class.
- Verbal interactions, student motivation and even student behavior appear to improve when newspapers are used in class.
- Newspaper use in class tends to promote increased newspaper use at home.

What services are available through NIE?

Newspaper in Education programs are as varied as the 600 newspapers that administer them. In most, newspapers are delivered to schools at a reduced price. Newspaper staff members—NIE coordinators or educational services managers—work with schools to help implement NIE activities. Many NIE programs offer a variety of services to participating educators: in-service workshops on ways to use newspapers to full advantage, newspaper-related curriculum materials especially tailored to the school curriculum, for-credit courses cosponsored with local universities, tours of newspaper facilities, advisories to high school journalism teachers, and much, much more.

How to get started

Starting an NIE program in your school system, school or classroom is as simple as picking up the telephone. Call the educational services department at your local newspaper and ask for an introduction to NIE.

The American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation is the administrative organization for NIE programs in the United States. If you are unable to find a nearby newspaper with an established NIE program, contact ANPA Foundation, The Newspaper Center, Box 17407 Dulles Airport, Washington, D.C. 20041; 703 648-1000.

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